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SELÉNÉ

BY

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TO MY DEAR FRIEND
HENRY MILLS ALDEN

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SELÉNÉ

SELÉNÉ

I

FROM April Latmos and the deeps of night,
Down-faring with a mighty wind that seemed
The breath of the wild moon, came one alone,
Unquiet where all else was quietude.
With skyey gait, on sandals sharp with sleet,
Glistening she sped along, while at her heels
Two hounds as grey as dawn leaped airily,
Nor seemed of heavier substance formed than
that
Of which the dawn is fashioned. On her brow
A jewel, clear like ice and white like flame,
In shape a crescent, burned with steady glare
Of lustre delicate, and as she ran
Lit up her crisp, pale profile, arrogant
Against the dim serene of forest gloom.
Behind her, like a saffron-coloured cloud,
Blown backward from the new moon's slender
horn,

SELÉNÉ

Her tresses, by her vehement speed unloosed,
Melted in golden mist upon the wind.
Tall was she and of form so buoyant bright,
Not that fair-seeming wrought of sunset clouds
To mimic Argive Helen and to lure
The wroth Achaians unto bitter war,
Had skimmed more light above the stolid earth.
A many-plaited skirt of lissom white
Was from her shining knees up-caught and drawn
Beneath a girdle starred with chrysoprase,
With jacinth, and with rubies. On her breast,
Wide-spaced and maiden-small, an armour fair
Of crystal patines lapping scales of jade
Dissolved with her quick breath, from white to
grey,

From grey to white, like spangles that bestrew
A moonlit wave, while 'gainst the nipping air,
A silvery fawn-skin o'er her shoulders hung,
Whereon the tiny tips of antlers gold
Seemed crocus-buds outpeering from a fleece
Of new-fallen snow. Her bow was in her hand,
And ever as she leaped along the way,
More swift of startled flight than once had been
The sacred fawn whose pelt now covered her,
The crystal arrows in her quiver clanged.
Thus for an hour she fled, nor paused for breath,

SELÉNÉ

Nor loosed her eyelids from their curve intense,
Until, beside a pool o'erglazed with ice,
That in the heart's core of the forest lay
As doth a cold, dark thought in hearts of men—
Ay, and of gods sometimes—she stopped abrupt,
Paused, smiled unmirthful, then, with sudden
frown,

'Whereat the night took on a shadow weird,
Drave her bright bow sheer through the skim of
ice.

It splintered into shape of a vast star,
And 'neath the opal-fringed float of light
From that clear crescent melted swift away
As though beneath the gaze of Helios.
Anon came bubblings soft, and limpid gush
Of music, airy, lorn, mysterious,
Like that which fluctuates on stilly nights
About the hollow silence of a ship
Wherein a poet lies awake for love.
Next rose a vapour, whorl on delicate whorl
Uncoiling in the starry frost above,
Until the pool, deep-sunk in greenery
Enamelled all with glair of frozen mist,
Was like unto a Titan's drinking-cup
From hugest emerald scooped and hurled by Zeus,
In wrath, from heaven. Slow those milky plumes

SELÉNÉ

Of vapour-delicate, earthward to float,
As from a white dove's breast the feathers torn
By beak of eagle fierce, cloud-high in air;
More slower still to melt, for long or they,
Like shadows white, had stolen beyond her ken.
The eager huntress saw a gleaming shape
Shine through them, as a slender shaft of foam
Shines through the curtains of the fog. Then
chords

Of subtle harmony shrilled, and then a voice
Only less sweet than that wherein the moon
Sings to the listening stars—"O thou most dear,
Long wished for and unseen for many a day,
Wherefore now comest thou on eager feet,
With quiver brimming and with bow unstrung?"
Whereat the other, half as she would weep
For anger, or for sorrow, or for both,
Reached out her silver arms, and in a tone
Of sweetness still more spherey exquisite,
Exclaimed: "O Steropé! O nurse belovèd,
Delay not in thy coming, for to thee,
To thee alone of all created beings,
Turn I for counsel, ay, mayhap for comfort!"

As when from tenting clouds of twilight grey
Forth leaps the summer lightning delicate,

SELÉNÉ

And with one scintillant stroke of her keen wand
Transforms the further heaven into a rose
Of golden fire, auroran, myriad-petalled,
Whereto the stars like jewelled bees do cling,
So at that last word "comfort" there sprang
forth

From out the shrivelling mist a splendour swift,
Shaped like a woman, on whose forehead glanced
A beamy star of radiance palpitant.

Now with a tangled skein of rainbow-light
It meshed her brow, now in one steadfast hue,
Like to a flower of violet crystal shone,
Ridging her crispy hair with purple dusk
And purpling even such heavenly stars as flashed
Through its transparent tremble. To her limbs,
Haughty, as of a goddess, there did cling
A sleek, bright gown of rippled silver, strewn
With sea-weed variegate and little shells
Rose-pale and curlèd as the scattered leaves
Of apple-blossoms. Such her dress. Her eyes
Had looked on dying love and in her voice
Thrilled low that unemotional despair
Of one who long ago, who all alone
His requiem had chanted. Not in vain
That shining-footed one had called to her,
For straightway to her breast she drew the maid

SELÉNÉ

With murmurs inarticulate, which are
Of love the most expressive—such soft sounds
As brooding birds make o'er their timorous
young,

By cry of distant hawk or owl alarmed.
Then swiftly spake: "For comfort, sayest thou?
For counsel? Dost thou come to me for
these?

Ay, or to any? If so, child, wherefore?
Nor longer hold me in this dire suspense,
Nor with thine eyes affrayèd question me,
But clearly speak, nor anything hold back,
Since to their nurses, maids, though goddesses,
Will often tell what to their mothers dear
They do not utter." But that lovely one
Replied not till some minutes bright had fled
And a dark, gauzy cloud o'erveiled the moon,
When, with quick fingers in the silver cord
Of her relaxèd bow, she answered thus:

"Nay, dearest nurse, thou'dst speak in other
wise

Couldst thou but even faintly dream the truth.
Alas! Alas! How may I tell thee of it,
Who know not yet, in very honesty,
What to the full it means, nor why, indeed,

SELÉNÉ

My heart so hurries, being not urged thereto
By wrath or fear, or sight of goodly game."

But Steropé, too loving to be patient,
Ceased not to coax her till the truth was told;
And in this wise she told it: "Hear thou, then,
O more than mother, hear these dizzy words
That past thine ears will fall, as in a dream
Fall the firm stars past eyes of mortals—hear!
Nor eve it was, nor night, but that pale hour
When Helios doffs his robe of wavy flame,
And in his wingèd boat, whose dim, grey vans
Shed over sea and land their plumage frail,
Doth lay him down to rest. I, having stooped
To bind the evening-star upon his mast,
That by its light the pilot Wind might steer
Nor drive ere dawn upon a bank of clouds,
Took then my silver bow, and, stealing swift
Along the sapphire ramparts of the night,
Leaped like a falling-star to Latmos."

"Nay,
Too much of falling-stars," sighed Steropé—
"An omen ill in this. But tell me more."

"Thou knowest well, none better, sweetest nurse,

SELÉNÉ

How from my birth I loved the free, wide life
Of wood and meadow; how with kirtle shortened,
Hair bound in mimicry of thine, and bow
Bent from a laurel twig and strung with strands
Of thy long, twinkling tresses, I would skim
On eager tiptoe after butterflies,
Speeding my tiny shafts so skilfully
That ere I ended myriads to the stem
Of birch and olive by those arrows pinned,
Like unto wind-stirred blossoms there would
flutter.

Ay, well thou knowest, how since a little maid
I loved mine own bright freedom more than love—
Such love as maidens dream of ere they sleep!
Or had such lightsome thoughts disturbed my
rest,

With arrowy laughter I had pierced them
through,

As with my childish shafts the butterflies.
No! mine it was to feel the larger zest,
The nobler ache, the frenzy all divine
Of maidenhood that knows itself a power,
A force supreme through very loneliness!—
Mine, mine the ecstasy of fellowship
With winds and waves and frost, and fire itself;
Possessing all things, yet by none possessed;

SELÉNÉ

Serving all creatures, yet to none a slave;
Mine to smile kindly, but with wonder deep,
On lovers throbbing at my silver shrine;
So lovelier far appeared to me the lives
Diverse of those who, sharing not their souls
Each with one other only, give to all
Freely of what in freedom they acquire,
Nor by such gifts aught lose, but rather gain."

She paused and with her bright hair veiled her
face,

While once again that shadow, mystic-wan,
As of a swift eclipse, saddened the night.
Then came a long, long sigh, a shudder deep,
As though some cruel thought or memory
Her very soul upwrenchèd by the roots;
Whereat pale Steropé: "Alas and woe!
What hast thou done, my nursling, dearer far
Than mine own child, had I or son or daughter—
What hast thou done, or who to thee hath
brought

Dismay and sorrow?" Thus again that other:

"Listen and thou shalt hear, for to the loving
The gods their secrets tell whether of good
Or evil, dark and wingless. Came I then

SELÉNÉ

To Latmos all alone, for even nymphs
Wax wearisome at times, like mortal maids,
And with their chatter fright away high thoughts
As sparrows drive sweet song-birds from a
grove.

Alone I came and glad for loneliness;
Shrill with imagined music was my breast,
For there to give it voice I did not choose,
Lest I should startle up some drowsy stag
Beyond my arrows' range. But suddenly,
Off sped my hounds across a shining lawn,
Like shadows fleet of mated hawks that sweep
Above a winter field in Libya.

A lovely doe it was, as lustrous fair
As clouds that near the full orb of the moon,
With hoofs as bright as these my sandals are.
Swift I to follow, for with hurrying feet
The ways that lead to woe are ever trod,
Though afterwards we marvel at our haste."

Then Steropé's bright star did flicker down
And leave her forehead dim, she crying out:
"Alas! alas! for thee and me, my child,
Since wisdom bitter-true as this thou speakest
Not even the gods, not even thou, Seléné,
Except through dire experience, can know."

SELÉNÉ

Whereat the fair girl-goddess, crystal pale
As with the presage of immortal grief,
Faltered, but spake anon, her face still veiling:
“Quickly I followed, quick mine arrows sped;
I heard the chimy baying of my hounds
Ring on the dark, like stroke of steel on
steel,
Now low, now loud; nearer, then far away;
And still I followed over brook and hill,
Through wilds of matted gorse, through coverts
deep,
Shredding my silver wimple on the boughs
Of many a thorn-tree, leaving everywhere
Sparkles of silver from my sandals bright.
So keen my zest, so vehement my desire,
So filled my veins with that ecstatic rage,
Mysterious, of the hunter for the prey—
Rage that is not mere cruelty, and yet
Doth lead the mildest souls to cruel deeds.
Yes, Artemis I was then, not Seléné,
For many maidens in one goddess dwell.
To Phœbos I am Phœbé, silver twin
Of his gold godhead. Unto thee, Seléné,
The meek, the soft, the loving; unto men,
Ay, unto rebel Titans, Artemis,
She of the fatal arrows—Artemis,

SELÉNÉ

Whom it were death to anger—Artemis,
Whom it were death to love!”

There stole a hush
Through all the vasty hollow of the night,
Even as though great Nature held her breath,
Hearing from Dian’s lips inviolate
The name of Aphrodité’s withering son.
But she, that fearless one, shook back her hair
With sculptural smile, disdainful, of a goddess,
And thrust her shining bow into the gloom,
There whirling it with movements powerful
Of her slight wrist, until upon the darkness
A sphere was drawn as though in diamond dust
Streaked through with fire of ruby and of beryl.
Then one by one her arrows to the cord
Fitted and sped along the violet sea,
Where bright they swam, nor did the Nereids dare
To steal the sacred shafts of Artemis.
So there they floated till that Eos woke
And gathered them into her pinky kirtle,
That she at evening time might give them back
Unto her sister dear. Ah, had she known
That of those deathly arrows one would pierce
The breast of great Orion! But mighty Fate
A darksome veil can spin o’er brighter eyes

SELÉNÉ

Than those of Dawn; ay, o'er the sparkling feet
Of Artemis herself could cast her web,
Fearful, of dingy hue. And on that night
She chose to cast it.

Steropé still trembled
Beneath the awful name of Love, but she,
The arrogant in chastity untempted,
Who scorned sweet kisses, knowing not to kiss,
And lightly took Love's mighty name in vain,
Having yet no need to utter it in prayer—
She, the maid-goddess, laughed like mortal maids
Whose mood has been too serious—"Nay, fair
nurse,"

So she began, "as solemnly I spake
As I had been the owl of Pallas, fresh
From gazing on a sleeping Gorgon. Nay—
By Pallas' self!—no Gorgon 'twas I saw."

"Thou sawest?" breathed shuddering Steropé.

"Thou sawest?"

Speak, child. What sawest thou? Ai! Ai!

Great Héré!

Pitiless art thou who dost work such horrors."

"'Horrors?' sweet nurse? But listen. Once again

SELÉNÉ

I am Seléné. Gently will I speak
Of things most gentle. All my shafts are sped;
Once more that nameless trouble stirs my breast,
And what I feel I know not how to voice.
Yet will I tell thee all, and thou to me
My new mood shalt interpret. On I fled,
Faster and yet more fast, till at the end,
With my loud-breathing dogs, I ran abreast,
When, as a white sail dives into a gulf
Of dark ing water, out of sight the doe
Plunged, and the hounds, osing the scent, ran
wild,
Their frothy muzzles dappling all the grass
O'er which in vain dismay they circled. Next—
Ah, Steropé, dear nurse, even to thee
How can Seléné word what next befell?—
I stooped, and by the jewel on my brow
Gazed deep into that hollow where had leaped
The magic doe, for this I truly deem her;
How else could she have 'scaped my hounds, my
arrows?
Stooping, I gazed, but saw no jagged cliff
Plumed here and there with ferns, no maw of
stone
With the black foam of darkness overflowing—
Only a breeze-stirred veil of ivy-leaves

SELÉNÉ

Glossed all with brittle dew, that in the gleam
Down-wavering from my crescent shook abroad
A shower of spangles azure-white and chill.
This, with my bow, I parted, and, behold!
An airy scoop i' th' mountain-side, whence crept
Globe after globe of vapour luminous,
Like spheres of dandelion-seed impelled
By breath of lazy Titan hid within.
At last they rolled no more, and all grew dim—
The dimness of a crimson lily-flower
Wherethrough the moonlight seeps, for here the
cave

Was lined with royal-coloured porphyry,
In hugest natural slabs up-piled. Nor long
I hesitated but with arrow drawn
Up to my ear-tip, dashed beneath the vine.
Scarce twenty paces had I ta'en, when lo!
I stood within a grotto, winter-white,
Yet like the summer warm. All tenderest
flowers

Netted the sparry walls, and on the floor,
With sand more pure than powdered pearl be-
strewn,

The fallen blooms like little shells did lay—
Some twilight-blue, some freckled o'er with gold,
Some whorled with milky-green and lilac dim,

SELÉNÉ

Some faintly rosed about the silver heart,
Some splashed with carmine, some with violet
rimmed.

More lovely they of weird, fantastic hues
Than thou shalt see a mermaid's changeful scales,
And of so sweet a perfume one would think
All fair spring days, since first the seasons reigned,
Had wandered there to die. No light there was
Save that my crescent shed, no sound more harsh
Than that of water stealing as through dreams.
Far, far without I heard the booming note
Of my bewildered hounds, a rustling faint
As of a dryad stealing from her tree;
A nightingale's wild 'Itys! Itys!' Then
No more I heard save noise of mine own heart,
That seemed to echo 'Itys.' On I fled.
Like moonstone now the sheeny floor appeared,
And as I ran, another Artemis
Pressed her fleet foot to mine and ran with me,
Head downward in her pallid, starless heaven.
Meseemed, O nurse, she mocked at me and smiled
Where I smiled not, and that her crescent burned
With passionate scarlet such as I abhor,
And that the arrow in her bow was wrought
With gold and gems and feathered gorgeously
With phoenix feathers, all unlike my shafts

SELÉNÉ

Of crystal pure from snowy falcons winged.
But suddenly she vanished, for my veil,
Whirled upward by a gush of air so sweet
That from my childhood's island seemed it
blowing,

Thrice wrapped itself about my crescent. Ah,
What tremblings seized me then, even me,
Seléné!—

What shudderings dire, as of a little maid,
Mortal, and all alone in haunted dusk!
What premonitions of dismay, what dread,
What longing for the starry walls of heaven!
Frantic, with aspen hands the veil I rent,
And once again stood radiant and Diana.
Full swift dissolved away that sparkling gloom,
As of the emerald twilight under sea,
Wherethrough the living phosphor wreathes and
coils

In clouds of luminous gold-dust. Then, indeed,
There was revealed to me a sight so lovely,
Not Helios drowsing in his shadowy boat,
With locks aflare, like to a joyous dream
Upon the bosom of a dream of death—
Not even he, quick flashed by memory
Upon my inner sight, seemed half so fair.
He was asleep—the sleep of little children,

SELÉNÉ

When the faint parted mouth is like a flower
That for the bee makes ready. Yet, by Ares!
No softling he. The mighty muscles twitched
Beneath the supple whiteness of his arm,
As in his dreams, hearing my arrows click,
He for his own great bow of yew did reach.
'Twas taller far than I, and I am tall,
Even for a goddess, nurse. In verity
He looked more Phœbos than does Phœbos' self;
As though in laughing wise he could have con-
quered

The Python's conqueror. And yet so calm
His earnest brow, his dreaming lips so gentle,
Methought he was the very God of Sleep,
And I no more Seléné, but a Dream
Sent there to lull him into sweeter rest.
Thus marvelling I gazed, until at last,
As when in heaven itself come memories faint
Of other heavens wherein divinity
Was more divine, that unknown dreamer's face
Grew suddenly familiar. I had known
Those curves of lid and lip in other worlds,
In that bright former heaven, perhaps. I
stooped,

Then suddenly felt—was it fear I felt?
Tell me, dear nurse.—My heart is beating now

SELÉNÉ

At the mere memory of how it beat.
Nor was it strange that I, although a goddess,
Should feel in somewise moved. That face, O
nurse,
Was more like to mine own than is Apollo's—
Ay, line for line, the brow, the mouth, the chin.
The nostrils proudly stirred, as though in sleep
He, god-like, breathed the incense of my wonder.
Then was I shaken as by more than fear;
But what I know not, only this I know,
Myself's true twin lay there, and nevermore
Can Phoebos be to Phœbé all in all."

"O miserable maid!" cried Steropé
"Thou knowest not what thou sayest. Alas the
day!
Behold the doom thou didst foretell, great
Themis!
Alas! Alas!"

Whereat Seléné troubled:

"Why wailest thou as though at evil news?
What doom did Themis prophesy? Speak, nurse.
Have I a brother greater than Apollo?
Was there a third to Zeus and Leto born?
Is this the son that Zeus so long hath feared?"

SELÉNÉ

Is this the stripling god whom Destiny
Hath sent to hurl Zeus from the throne of heaven,
Even as he Kronos hurled, who in his turn
Dethroned Uranos? Speak. Is this the doom?
Nay, if thou art afraid to tell on earth
The secrets learned in heaven, I will not plague
 thee,
For though all heaven itself should cry him
 mortal,
My heart assures me that he is a god."

But Steropé: "Full many a shepherd-lass
Hath said the same of many a shepherd-lad.
Now tell me one thing ere thou ask me more:
For what wast thou so troubled when at first
Thou soughtst me here? Thy voice, thy sight,
 thy glances
Fearful, as of a nymph by Satyrs chased,
Thy heart a-beat like to a nightingale's
What time its mate is singing—what of these?
Surely thou wast not troubled to this measure
Because that thou, the Goddess of the Night,
Hadst looked upon a possible god asleep!"

Then Artemis the proud hung down her head
Before the tender mockery of her nurse,

SELÉNÉ

As she a little, naughty maid had been,
And, with her golden hair her crescent veiling,
Thus answered in the small, hushed voice of shame:
“Dear nurse, so like—so like he was to me,
So sure I was of being his sister, nurse,
That I—”

“On! On!” cried Steropé—”

“Alas!

If what I did was ill—I meant it well—
But I did kiss—oh, not his lips! believe me.
I kissed—even as Apollo kisses mine—
His forehead and his beautiful, broad eyelids.”
As when a wild swan from her plashy nest
Startled doth rise on whirring wings superb
To see the arrow-head in sunlight gleaming,
Yet cannot think it meant to bring her harm
Until within her breast the shaft vibrates
And to the stars her desolate cry doth waver,
So Steropé, and such the cry she uttered:
“Alas, thou bitter fate! Thou fate of woman,
Whether or goddesses or mortal maids!
Well didst thou prophesy, O mighty Themis.
Now do I question if thou wroughtest wisdom
To yield great Delphos to thy pet Apollo.

SELÉNÉ

And yet I could not think the direful day
Would ever be 'to-day,' but in my heart,
Whene'er I thought of it, I said 'to-morrow.'
O me accursed beyond all other beings,
Since helpless I must look a second time
Upon my piteous history, enacted
By her most dear to me of heaven or earth!"

Seléné, vexed to hear so dire lament
O'er what to her seemed rather cause for gladness,
Frowned, and her delicate lips, grown haughty,
answered:

"An empty mind it shows to cry aloud
In puny terror over great events
Half comprehended. Speak thy meaning clearly,
Or silence keep." Then with a sudden change
Of voice and mood: "Forgive me, dearest nurse,
But vex me not with shrieks and grim allusions
To fate and woe and doom. Such methods leave
To lesser minds. Tell thou to me the truth."

"Poor, human-hearted goddess," sighed her
nurse,

"What truth wouldst thou that I should tell to
thee?

All truths of divers other truths are wrought."

SELÉNĒ

“This first of all, then: Is he not my brother?”

“Nor kin he is to thee in flesh or spirit.”

“Then sure a powerful god, of heaven grown
weary?”

“Both heaven and weariness lie yet before
him.”

“How came it that he called me by my name?”

“Such things doth Moera know, and she alone.”

“Why leaped my heart to hear my name thus
spoken?”

“Most mortal maids are there more wise than
Dian.”

“What is that bitter fate, the fate of woman?”

“Thou must as women feel to know their
fate.”

“But I, a goddess, may not feel as mortals.”

SELÉNÉ

“Not even the gods can to their hearts dictate.”

“Thy words do chill my heart with sad foreboding.”

“Seléné’s heart were better chill than warm.”

“Nurse, nurse, I pray thee cease that droning chaunt,

As of an oracle foretelling death.

Chide me as I thy mortal nursling were,

With careless tenderness and loving spleen,

But freeze me not with cadenced utterance

Of words too cautious to be comforting.

Tell me this doom, this prophecy of Themis.

If sorrow must be borne, surely ’twere better

In knowledge than in ignorance to bear it.

And yet, O Moera, what is it thou knowest?

Perchance, even now, thou weavest a darkling thread

Into the silver curtain of my life;

For though immortal, mortal dread o’ercomes me.

Steropé! Save me! Warn me not too late.

This my bright hair, which like a golden flame

Illumes the dusky cavern of the night,

For very fear hangs lustreless. Ah! Ah!

SELÉNÉ

I feel the icy breath of Atropos
Spread crisping through its fibres, which in horror
Stiffen as though with frost. Was it my doom
That Themis prophesied?"

“Yet mayst thou 'scape it!
Yet mayst thou foil stern Héré's vengeful ire!”
Cried Steropé, grown eager on a sudden.
“The time hath come to tell thee good and evil,
That thou mayst choose between them; nor,
indeed,
Canst thou do otherwise, O Artemis,
Seeing that since Chaos even the greatest gods
Have been compelled by Moëra, the Resistless,
To say or soon or late if they will be
Divinely evil or divinely good.”

But Artemis, the proud, from flickering lids
Lowered in scorn, not meekness, shot a glance
Kin to the little, cruel, self-sure smile
She bends upon the flying deer, and thus
Imperious spake: “I choose to be myself;
Or glad or sad, Artemis still in all.
If I have chosen well or ill I know not;
But could I change my destiny, good nurse,
By changing aught in me that makes me Dian,

SELÉNÉ

Merely to please the whim of other gods,
Were that my fate more dark than night with-
out me,
I would remain myself."

Then Steropé,
By fear and admiration sore beset:
"No more, O mistress great, and child beloved—
No more, until thou'st heard my bitter story.
Such words of haughty challenge unto Fate
As those thou speakest are winged with poison-
ous feathers,
The which grim Moëra garners up and uses
To speed her deathly shafts unto the hearts
From which such arrogant thoughts did issue
forth."

"My fate is mine, not Moëra's, though she weave
it,"

Said Cynthia, wrathful still. "Nor do I fear
To bear what I of ill was born to bear.
Far rather let myself fulfil myself,
Although to gain full being I lose my godhead,
Than live in tame abeyance unto caution,
Speaking in whispers, lest perchance I rouse
Some sleeping vengeance."

SELÉNÉ

“Rightly didst thou say,”
Replied her sorrowful nurse, “that many maids
Dwell in one goddess, for in no respect
Art thou the faltering, fluttering, timorous girl
Who sought me here to-night. Why should I
speak?

As well endeavour to direct the course
Of one of those thy shafts, were’t on its way,
As counsel thee in this thy present mood.
Yet listen, for the mightiest may learn
From the misfortunes of the humblest.”

“Speak,”
Said Phœbé, “and remember that to thee
My heart is ever soft, though hard my mood.”

“Come, then, my child,” that sad one answered,
“there
Beside me stretch thy lovely limbs in rest,
For none too short this piteous history.”

Seléné being lain along the grass,
As fair as foam along a dark-green wave,
Her nurse, with drooping head on arm dejected,
In this wise spake: “Full often hast thou heard,
O Artemis, since first thy mother placed thee,

SELÉNÉ

A little maid, between my childless breasts,
Of those so dreadful woes wherewith great Héré
Did torture her for having won that love
Which she, though Queen of Heaven, could
never win

From Heaven's King. Thou knowest these things
of old,

And how wise Themis, she who first was Queen
Of Zeus and Heaven, did feed both thee and
Phœbos

Upon that sacred food whereby divinity
Remains divine; but what I now relate
Is not to any known in heaven or earth
Save to thy mother Leto, me, who tell thee,
And Themis, her from whom we first did hear it.
Thus it befell: Thy mother on the day
That Themis to Olympos did return,
Talked long with her of what the future held
For ye, her heaven-sprung children. Now
'twas clear,

So Leto oft assured me, that the goddess,
From the beginning, loved thy brother more
Than thee she loved, he being male, and Themis
More god than goddess as to mental sex.
For him she prophesied but good; for thee,
Possible evil, which, however, thou,

SELÉNÉ

None other, mightst avert if warned in season
By one upon whose truth thou couldst rely.
I will repeat the baleful oracle,
The last she spake from Delphos. Thus it ran:
'If that she be the enemy of Love,
Sorrow shall fall on her—ay, mortal grief.
If Love become her enemy, more sure
The fatal pain. If friend she be to Love,
Still woe on woe. If Love her friend become,
Woe, ever woe. Nor enmity nor friendship
Should there exist 'twixt Aphrodité's son
And Leto's daughter, if she would maintain
An immortality of delicate bliss,
Of rapture subtle and of perfect beauty.'
Thus Themis; nor for all her bitter tears
And pleadings desperate could thy mother dear
Win from her aught of more explicit nature.
But I, who am in such lore deeper skilled
Than yet thou dreamest, through many a day
and night,
Through many a winter dark and summer
flaming,
Did pauseless search the solemn universe,
Till somewhat I had solved the mystery
Of those portentous words, so doubly veiled
In craft of priestess and of woman-god.

SELÉNÉ

And thus I learned that Héré, many-minded
And crafty in proportion to her power,
Had for thy ruin a subtle scheme devised
To lure thee from thy joyous chastity
Into the sombre labyrinth of passion,
Where sorrow doth more sorrowful become,
Sweet things more seeming sweet, but bitterer,
Beauty indeed more beautiful, yet shorn
Of all its consolation, and the sound
Of lovely music, erstwhile so enchanting,
An anguish to the soul, nor less an anguish
For being desired; so terrible is Love
That he can force the captive spirit to yearn
For what aforetime it abhorred, to loathe
What once, above all else, it did desire."

"And didst thou learn the means whereby she
purposed
To work my woe?" asked Phœbé, quiet-voiced,
As are the strong when wroth to danger.

"Ay,

It was for that I spake," said Steropé.
"I learned, O Artemis, that to thy doom
Thou wouldst be drawn by love of one, a mortal,
Whom thou wouldst find fast-sleeping in a cave

SELÉNĒ

Upon Mount Latmos. Judge, I pray thee, now,
If empty fear I showed, or causeless grief,
When I bewailed what thou to-night didst tell
me?"

But often they who look for sighs to rend
The breasts of mighty ones by Fate o'erta'en
Are sore amazed when from those lips, un-
blanching,

The dauntless laughter rings. So Steropé,
When Phœbé, to her fullest splendour leaping,
Laughed, and a second time laughed vengefully,
And yet a third time laughed with scorn superb.
"Thinkest thou," she said, "that Zeus-born
Artemis

Feareth the loveless wife of Zeus? That I,
Whom Love may not approach unless I bid him,
Have aught to fear from Love? As for thy tale,
Poor nurse, they have deceived thee. Surely I,
Who am a goddess, could not for a god
Mistake a mortal man, though he were fairer
Than Phrygian Ganymede."

"O hapless Phœbé,
Be warned, be warned in time, as thou desiredst."
Thus Steropé, with love and terror desperate;

SELÉNÉ

“Thy very fearlessness doth make me fearful.
So was it that I felt and thought and spake
Ere awful Love did work my utter ruin.”

Then Phœbé, startled: “What didst say, good
nurse?

Thy ruin? What ruin? Thou’rt dreaming, art
thou not?—

What ruin?”

But Steropé, with smile majestic
Of calm despair long known, moved back a
pace

And said: “This shame also hath Fate appointed;
This hour, too, must I pass and live thereafter.
Knowest thou me who I am, O Queen of Chaste-
ness?”

“Surely, sweet nurse, I know thee,” said the
goddess.

“Alas! doth madness seize thee?”

“Nay, great Dian,
Thou knowest my name, my face, my voice, my
love,

But me thou dost not know.”

SELÉNÉ

“Who art thou, then?”

“I am that hapless one who out of heaven,
The home of Love, by Love himself was hurled,
Because I scorned his power, as thou dost
scorn it.

A broken string I am upon the lyre
Celestial, a lovely song unfinished,
A fallen star. Alas, what wilt thou say?
I am that seventh Pleiad who was lost,
Who from her silver footstool near thy throne
Was cast to earth, because like thee, O Phœbé,
She did defy great Aphrodité's son.”

“Art thou that Steropé?”

“Thou knowest it now.”

“Art thou in truth the vanished Pleiad?”

“Ay,
Truth have I told thee, Artemis—no fable.”

“But she, that luckless one, did love a mortal?”

“And I a mortal loved and love, Seléné.”

SELÉNÉ

“But Steropé the Pleiad, how may I,
Goddess of Chastity, her error name?
She more than loved—she let herself be loved—
Ay, as a bride she gave herself to him—
That mortal who destroyed her.”

“Truth thou speakest—
All this I did—I, Steropé the Pleiad.”

Then Artemis, by sovereign instinct urged,
Caught up her bow, and with keen fingers
searched

Her empty quiver, while that Steropé
Stood smiling that sad smile of one who knows
How little doth a breaking heart avail
In this sad world where hearts break every day,
Nor by the careless gods are more regarded
Than is a shattered dove's egg, though it be
The sole one in the nest. But suddenly,
As when a cloud makes tender the bright moon,
Sorrow o'ercame her, and familiar love
And pity infinite; whereat she turned,
Casting her fateful bow upon the ground,
And to her bosom drew that lovely star,
More fair, though fallen, than many a thronèd
sphere—

SELÉNÉ

“Whate’er thou didst thou didst ere I was
born.”

Thus Phœbé, in divinity still young,
And not as yet the enemy of Love,
Though not his friend: “Sweet, hapless Steropé!
Dark, dark the veil that Eros must have
spread

Before thine eyes, to make thee risk thy place
In that divinest choir for mortal love.
Tell me, poor, sorrowful one, how did it chance
That thou unto a mortal gavest thy love?”

“Ah, Phœbé, mortal seemed he not to me.
A god I thought him, even as thou thinkest
Endymion—”

“‘Endymion?’ Is it his name?
A fairer name, at least, no god doth own.
Divine his name, though he be mortal, nurse.”

“And mortal thy self - will, though thou’rt a
goddess.

Ah me, dear child! This did thy mother fear,
By Themis warned. For this did she beseech
me—

SELÉNÉ

Even me, unfortunate and fallen, fallen
Lower than star e'er fell—to be thy nurse,
That with the story of my wretched fate
I might from Héré's malice succour thee.
Alas! Seléné, wilt thou not be warned?
Think of my fate — nay, more, think of thy
mother's.

If she, for love of Zeus, the mightiest god,
Such woe endured, how mayst thou 'scape disaster

If thou unto a mortal give thy love?
Ay, great the error thou hast wrought already,
Kissing the brow and eyelids of this stranger;
For nimble-fingered Slander of one kiss
Can make a hundred, and to spouseless maids
Create unwished-for children of a shadow.
Behold the one respect wherein divinity
Less freedom hath than bound mortality.
Unto the least its every act lies bare.
Mistress thou art of all but privacy—
The great can have no secrets. Soon or late
Mankind must know the inner life of gods.
Be warned. Be warned, O thou beloved one!
Thou art the child of Zeus, but Zeus himself
Could not the Delphian Oracle defy
And be as much a god as he hath been."

SELÉNÉ

Whereat the goddess, serious, bent her brows,
And her cool, maiden majesty resumed:
“Woful, indeed, must Love have been to thee,
That thou of Love dost speak so wofully.
Tell me, didst thou e’er meet him face to face?”

“Nay, few in heaven or earth,” said Steropé,
“Have looked on Love. Invisible he comes,
With radiance mystic, oftener felt than seen.”

“Mystic thy words, good nurse, but lo! I speak
Clearly that thou mayst clearly comprehend.
I, Artemis, to-night will look on Love
With eyes unwavering and with heart un-
scorched.”

Whereat poor Steropé, her hands uplifting,
No more with Dian pleaded, but to Zeus
Her piteous prayer did make: “Alas! thou
great one,
Wilt thou thy child and Leto’s thus abandon
To Héré’s wrath? O Zeus, father of all things,
Be not to thine own daughter less than father!”

“And shall these eyes, which daily gaze on
Phœbos,

SELÉNÉ

Fear to behold the glory of a lesser,
Not even his son?"

"Thou knowest not what thou speakest.—
None is more great than Love, not even Moëra.
His glory could make pale Apollo's glory,
As doth Apollo's thine."

"O impious one!"
Cried Phœbé, at this saying wroth again.
"Dost thou not fear Apollo's mighty ire,
That of his glory thus thou falsely pratest?
Even Zeus, in lightning clad, is not more glorious
Than is Apollo when in fullest splendour."

"Alas!" replied her nurse, "whom Love hath
scourged
Fears not the wrath of any other god,
For of despair and pain the worst is known.
But Eros can make bright the halls of Hades,
Which thing nor Zeus nor Phœbos can accomplish."

"Thinkest thou that I, Seléné, child of Zeus
And Phœbos' sister, will such tales believe

SELÉNĒ

On hearsay? No! This very night I purpose
To look on Eros in full panoply,
As when before my father Zeus he fares."

"O arrogant goddess!" then cried Steropé;
"In this thy foolish act all men will see
That thou by birth art only half divine.
No god so brave but that he feareth Love;
Nor do I dread thy wrath, who on my breast
Cradled thy haughty head, who taught thy lips
The name of Zeus to murmur, who, indeed,
Showed thee to aim thy shafts unerringly.
Send one to search my bosom; 'twill but find
A heart more true to thee than is thine own
When it doth urge thee onward to such deeds."

But Phœbé, unappeased: "Well is it for thee,
Thee ready with advice unto thy betters,
Thee crazed with exile from thy native heaven,
Thee star that like a glowworm now must creep
Upon the dusky bosom of the earth,
Who once wert brightest of that brightest Seven—
Well is it for thee that thou my love didst win
Ere rousing thus my wrath. As for thy counsel,
Thou hast but hastened what thou wouldst pre-
vent;

SELÉNÉ

For ere the sigh which swells thy timorous breast
Can mingle with the night, I, Artemis,
Will be upon my way to summon him,
This so tremendous god from high Olympos,
That, radiance unto radiance, we may talk
Of Themis and her mighty prophecy."

Thus Artemis, defiant of great Love,
Who, on Olympos hearing her, did smile
A sweet, frore smile, unlike what men imagine
The lips of Love to wear, then spreaded slow
The tranquil splendour of his golden wings,
And in relaxèd loveliness stood leaning
Upon the starry battlements of heaven
Till Phœbé's words should summon him to earth.

II

Meanwhile Endymion, smiling in his sleep,
Dreamed for himself another destiny,
In all unlike the one that drew anear
On silver-sandalled feet; for thus the gods
Tenderly mock the ignorance of man,
Who often, while the fair, gold fruit of joy
So near him hangs that on his eager brow

SELÉNÉ

He feels the mystic stirring of its leaves,
Within the darksome earth will delve and toil,
Seeking that other gold, whose mightiest bulk
Is not so precious as one little seed
Of that which hangs above him.

Yea, he dreamed,
This Carian prince (while love the loveliest
Toward him, careless both of love and fate,
Rushed like a thought to meet a poet's wish).
Endymion dreamed of freedom and a life
Wherein no more, oh, nevermore, should love
Be even so much as named. For he had known
The sapping, slow, brain-sucking misery
That falls upon the passionate whom error
Unto the passionless hath bound. Full well,
Ah, bitter well, he knew the dregs that lie
Within the cup of tepid tenderness:
The faint, dread taste of kisses laid on lips
That crave a love they never may inspire;
The gall of words that kindness prompts and truth
Doth force again into the struggling throat;
The weary ache of eyes unsatisfied
That in imagination shape anew
The face wherewith they long to be enamoured;
The silences that part what they should weld,

SELÉNÉ

As when a breeze doth scatter north and south
The petals of the flower it would caress,
Nor bends the rose upon the rose beneath;
The wingless hours that o'er the waste of time,
Like slow, grey serpents o'er a desert grey,
Creep toward the greyness of a same to-morrow;
The jests which summon tears, the earnest words
Which call forth merriment; the joy of one
Which to the other is a cause for grief,
The bondage which to one seems liberty,
The freedom which the other counts as blame;
The endless striving to unmake ourselves
Because one loves us for the thing we are not
Nor ever shall be—effort barren, senseless,
Resulting in the death, not of our faults,
But of the life within us, till we grow
Into a dull, meek, apathetic being,
Incapable of love or hate or joy,
Incapable of mourning overmuch
Our own incapability. These, these
The dregs that lie within that oft-praised cup,
And these Endymion so long had drained
That life's keen nectar seemed to him a draught
As tasteless as the wine we drink in dreams.
But there had come a day, that wondrous day
Which in all lives is consecrate to Moëra—

SELÉNÉ

The day of crisis, when we nevermore
May be as we have been or are; the day
On which, the past being sealed, the future
 opened,
A man re-entereth the womb of time,
And turns once more, new-born, to face his fate.

Who knoweth not that ecstasy of the soul
Which hath been bound and once again is
 free,
Knoweth not the keenest joy that visits man.
To worship Freedom as she should be worshipped,
One must have been a slave. Thus, all exultant,
Endymion from the palace gates fared forth,
Careless what way he followed, since all ways
Now led to liberty. And once again
Nature unveiled for him her awful beauty,
And her deep, voiceless message to his heart
Declared its manifold meaning as of yore,
In that delirious time of dreaming boyhood,
Or yet mistaken vows had numbed his soul
As 'twere with fetters wrought of ice and iron
By some dark spell. Yea, once again the earth
Drew him with sheer delight of loveliness,
Until the God that sleeps in all great natures
Awoke and cried him to himself immortal.

SELÉNÉ

Once more the mountains claimed him, and
the bay,

His own fair bay of Latmos, sang to him
With voice as of a myriad sirens: "Come,
Come, come Endymion! No woman's breast
So lovely as my sun-warmed waves! No brow
Of woman whiter than my moonlit foam!
Nor in the arms of woman shalt thou find
Such free delight as in my cool embrace!"

The starlight thrilled him like a rain of fire;
The Dawn her magic web of delicate flame
Cast over him, till, as of old, he felt
Her sweet enchantment through his veins dis-
solve.

The Wind, in language whose all-stirring fierce-
ness

He had forgot in days of apathy,
Now to his spirit shouted hymns of peril
Dearer than love's most lulling melodies.

All things in earth and air, by that vast
law

Which bindeth like to like, became as one
With his free spirit, and as comrades dear,
Playmates divine, most holy influences—
Which from the tangled skein of self un-
wound

SELÉNÉ

The golden thread of spiritual ecstasy—
He hailed them, and adored them, and was
happy.

But most of all, there grew on him a passion,
Vague, tremulous, yet intense, as of a priest
Who hath created for his sole adoring
Some fair religion all too exquisite
To share with others—there did well in him
A silent passion for the far, fair moon.
In every varying phase he worshipped her:
Or splendid, as in robes of frozen flame;
Or softly luminous, like a pearl reflecting
The damask of the rose wherein it lies;
Or veiled in windy mist, or in a stole
Of iridescent loveliness; or lonely
Save for her one dear star that never leaves her;
Or by her train of golden nymphs attended:
In all her moods he found her all divine,
Perfect; by night a glory, and by day—
When like a silver ghost she lay asleep
Upon the violet mantle of the Sun—
Fair as a dream of some belovèd face.

Thus worshipping, he slept, and in his sleep,
Impelled by adoration, seemed to rise
And mount the windy stairway of the stars.

SELÉNÉ

III

But now the wilful goddess, all elate
At thought of daring whom all others feared,
Outsped her smoking hounds, and, like a gleam
That on the arrowy foam of cataracts
Down flashes to the valley, from the crest
Of Latmos darted to the craggy shore.
The tide was at its full, and round her feet
Hissed the soft overflow of fleecy pools
Whereon the spray dissolved—nor green nor blue
Nor violet the ever-varying sea,
But tinct with all, as were Seléné's eyes,
And glossed with pearly gold like to her tresses.
Swift ran the dappled waves with hollow swirl
And sluicy, crashing din of backward surge
Among the pebbles, and the desolate strand
One long-drawn, fluctuant, sobbing roar gave
forth

Like to the wail by Polyphemos uttered
When sea-bright Galatea came not back.
Near by, a rock of iron-purple hue,
Rugged, immense, shaped like a galley's prow,
From out the silverish gurge its beak upreared,
Parting the spray, that as it backward fell

SELÉNÉ

Shattered the surface of the sleek, green waves
Till they seemed grey with hail. Upon this
crag

Seléné sprang, and, her right arm uplifting,
The mighty god of love did thus invoke:

“Eros! Where’er thou art, whatever doing:
Strollest thou on bright Olympus, smooth of wing
As are thy mother’s doves what time she sleepeth;
Or on the air of earth dost thou unfurl
Thy glowing plumes, or through the halls of
Death

On stilly pinions floatest, like a cloud
That with the sunset splendour yet transfused
Glimmers beneath the murky dome of night;
Smilest thou beside a prince’s ivory couch,
Or near a bed of pine-boughs, sweet with dew,
Dost watch the artless toying of some wood-
nymph

Who, in her shepherd’s sunburnt arms enlaced,
Shines silver-white as foam through sea-weed
brown;

Or wroth, or pleased, or sad for very gladness,
I do invoke thee straightway to descend
In full magnificence, as doth befit
A deity on deity attendant.”

SELÉNÉ

She ceased, and for an instant brief as that
Wherein the towered wave its crest suspends
Ere plunging in the glaucous scoop below,
No sign of godhead fired the placid sky;
Then suddenly beamed forth a slender brilliance
As 'twere a sunray through the hair of Night,
Lighting her dusky brow; and even Dian,
The ever-daring, ever-unappalled,
Felt her proud heart wince in her dauntless
breast

At this so prompt response unto her prayer,
Defiant of the Delphian Oracle,
Never, by gods or men, till now defied.
Next there did shine, what unto mortal eyes
Had seemed a star-white swan, with gilded
pinions,

But which Seléné saw to be a boat
Of thinnest ivory, winged with golden wings,
Wherein the god stood upright, veiled soft
In the warm aura of his loveliness.
Deep and yet delicate the orange haze
Shed from his scattered hair. His own bright
wings

Were lightly shut, nor did he guide his boat
Aerial, of grain so fragile fair
That with his radiance from within it glowed

SELÉNÉ

Like to an alabaster vase wherethrough
A rose-gold flame doth glimmer. Slope it came,
As though by subtle instinct thus impelled,
Straight to the rock whereon was poised Diana,
Its luminous keel shearing the curdled clouds
That ever froth and melt like noiseless foam
Upon the silent ocean of the air;
Its vans crisp rustling, even as autumn leaves,
Made gold by frost, on frosty breezes rustle;
Its wreaths of small, red roses sweeping out
Against the glittering pallor of the waves,
While ever softly showered the petals fine,
In crimson spray about the gleaming prow.

As when upon a sultry day in June
The clouds, like smouldering mounds of silver
fire

Along the incandescent azure float,
And o'er the burnished, many-coloured deep
(Of iridescence darkly beautiful
As are the necks of black Dodonian doves
Glinting in sunlight), send their wavering sheen,
Milk-fair and temperate like to mid-day moons,
Even so the bark of Eros poured its lustre
Along the furrows of the darkling sea,
While from its scintillant vans the rayèd blaze

SELÉNÉ

Lighted the shallows, till that one might note
The copper-tinted sea-weed undulate
Beneath the lucent beryl, like to tresses
Of sleeping Nereids, and the pebbles smooth,
O'erspread with golden network, tremulous,
Which, up-reflecting, meshed the bark itself
And all the lustrous body of the god
As though in flickering skeins of woven fire.
A crown of jonquils intertwined with stars
Rested above his dark and tender brows,
Wherein was gathered all the mystic gloom
That haunts the far, faint level of the sea.
Yearning his eyes, as of a soul bereft
Beyond what unto mortals or immortals
Is of bereavement known, yet on his lips
That listless smile, more deadly sweet and cold
Than frozen honey culled from poisonous flowers,
Still palely wavered. From one indolent hand
There hung a torch of mother-pearl, whose flames,
Lilac and topaz-white and violet azure,
Clustered in petal-wise about the centre,
Till like a clear-blue lotus-flower they seemed;
Nor robe nor mantle wore he, being clad
In his own splendour as in golden gauze,
Wherethrough his languid limbs gleamed silverly,
Veiled yet hidden not. Dian, beholding,

SELÉNÉ

Felt awe as of a mortal when in sleep
A dream in likeness of a god approaches,
And then grew wroth to feel herself inspired
By Love with reverence. He, though well aware
In what proud humour she awaited him,
Smiled ever, calm as Death's own thoughts of
death;

And, while the bark sank lower, spread his wings
Empyreal, which upbore him as a star
Is buoyed upon a wreath of gorgeous mist
What time the sun burns saffron in the west,
And thus, with naked beauty richlier clad
Than Zeus himself when in his robes of state
He takes the throne of heaven and wields its
thunder,

Unto the angry goddess drew anear.
Then unto him in scornfulwise she spake,
Although her heart was trembling: "Art thou
Eros,

Who in this guise my invocation answerest?
And knowest thou not, O son of Aphrodité,
That he who Phœbé angers hath to deal
With Phœbos also? I did summon thee
To come before me in full panoply
As when before my father Zeus thou farest,
And thou dost venture in my presence thus.

SELÉNÉ

A godlike deed, in truth, and one by gods
Long, long to be remembered!"

Whereon Love,
In that soft voice which masters even Death,
Thus gently answered: "Be not wroth, Seléné;
Even thus before thy father Zeus I fare,
Nor have I fuller panoply than this,
For Love unarmed is then most fully armed.
Behold me even as thou didst summon me,
And deign to tell me wherefore I am summoned."

"Nathless right well thou knowest it ere I tell
thee."

Thus Artemis, still haughty as to brow,
Though in her heart she wondered that so soon
Her mighty wrath should falter, little deeming
That wrath may not abide when love hath spoken.
"There are who call thee mightiest in Olympos.
If this be truth, why dost thou question me?"

Then Love, with subtle mirth about his eyelids,
While grave remained his eyes: "O thou most
lovely

Yet most unloving one, what cause have I
To search the lives to Anteros dedicate?

SELÉNÉ

Enough of care is mine, although a god,
Guiding the ways of those who worship me;
Nor may I long remain with thee, who art,
Even more than Anteros, mine enemy."

"Nay, not thine enemy!" cried eager Dian,
"Nor friend nor foe of thine, O Eros! Hear,
If so be thou hast not already heard,
That prophecy, the last by Themis spoken."
Whereon she told him all the piteous tale
By Steropé that night to her confided.
And, in conclusion: "Thou art now aware
For what I did invoke thee, mighty son
Of golden Aphrodité; let us swear,
As though in presence of the assembled gods,
That from this hour Eros and Artemis
Will be nor friends nor enemies."

But Eros,
Gentle alike in difference and agreement,
As are the truly great, being sure of greatness,
Made a slow sideward motion of his head,
Uplit by many a curl more yellow bright
Than daffodils in windy sunlight nodding,
And thus replied: "That may not be, O goddess,

SELÉNÉ

For who hath once beheld me, from that hour
Becomes my enemy or else my friend."

"Nay, Eros, I am neither, nor would be so."

"Thou dost not tell a wilful falsehood, Dian."

"How! Meanest thou that I have lied to thee?"

"Ask of thy heart if it doth feel indifference."

"If I speak falsely, then my heart will, too."

"Swear by thy silver bow that thou dost hate me."

"I hate thee not, O son of Aphrodité,
Nor would I have thy hatred. Better even
Thy friendship than thine enmity."

"Yet, Dian,
Those whom I dearest love I wound the sorest."

Then loud laughed Artemis her mocking laugh,
While her wide brow grew dark as moonless caves
Wherethrough the clangorous tide thunders
unseen,

SELÉNÉ

And thus to that forbearing one she spake:
"Nay, thou presumptuous godling, well thou
knowest

That 'gainst thy pretty shafts my breast is
proof.

I fear thee not, O Love—I fear thee not.
What! Dost thou take me for another Pleiad?—
A trembling star? I, who am Queen of Night?—
Empress of Chastity? Thou pratest to me—
Me, Artemis!—of what thy darts can do?
O little god, how wouldst thou fare if I
One of my deathly arrows loosed at thee?
Thou baby deity! thou pet of heaven!
Thou youngest god, alike in thought and being,
Since thou dost seek to fright the Huntress
Queen

With talk of darts!" She paused to laugh again;
But even in wrath is Eros ever gentle,
And thus with courtesy divine made answer:

"Truth hast thou said, Seléné, though but half.
Youngest of gods I am, yet only Chaos
Of all the gods is older. Thou dost call me
The son of Aphrodité, yet I walked
In might and power along the wayless sea
Ere the glad wave, which by its death gave birth

SELÉNĒ

To Cytherea, burst in opal foam
Among the foam-fair blossoms of Cythera.
When thy bright moon was lonely and the sun
Uncharioted, I, Eros, from that heaven
Whereunder heaven's own heaven is wanly
spread

As 'twere a floor of agate sifted o'er
With dust of topaz, looked into the future,
Deep pondering, when on a sudden, lo!
My inmost thoughts did visible become,
And there was light and life. Thus much I tell
thee,

O Artemis, that not in ignorance
Thou mayst defy me, who of all the gods
Am most inevitably that I am."

Again felt Artemis unwonted awe,
And fate's cold breath seemed tingling through
her hair,
But still her arrogant pose of mind and body
She, obstinate one, maintained, thus answer-
ing:

"Easy as darts are wingèd words to speed,
And even as little do I fear them, Eros;
Nor can I bring to light thy hidden meaning,
For surely thou dost speak in parables."

SELÉNÉ

"To that which I do speak, O Artemis,
'Twere best thou hearken both with mind and
body."

And though his lips still smiled his brow was
stern.

"Themis hath warned thee by that oracle
Which she most justly thought thou wouldst
revere;

Thy hapless mother through thy hapless nurse
A second time hath warned thee; and to-night
I, Eros—he 'gainst whom thou wast so cautioned—
A third time cry 'Beware!' Nay, I remind thee
In no wise tauntingly, but all in kindness,
That by descent thou'rt only half divine,
And that through me thou camest into being.
Nor speak, O Dian, till that I have finished,
Lest haply thou shouldst add more bitterness
Unto that cup which Mœra now is mixing,
And which thou, wilful one, dost seem deter-
mined,

Though trebly warned, to snatch from out her
hand.

Know, then, O goddess, that thy very pride
Doth prove thee lacking in divinity.

Moreover, that through me and me alone
Canst thou become in everything divine."

SELÉNÉ

Whereat proud Artemis, wrath conquering awe:
"Blasphemer, doubly blasphemous since thou,
Even thou thyself, art numbered with the
 gods.

What hath the Goddess of White Chastity
To do with gorgeous Love? Thou wouldst not
 dare

Such words to utter were not Phœbos sleep-
 ing!"

But Eros, grown more kinglike as to mien,
From lips disdainful sped his arrowy words:
"Chastity is not abstinence, but temperance.
True Chastity is truer for true love.
Negative purity white pebbles have,
Being cold and white, even as thou art, Seléné,
Who art not chaste because of conquered fire,
But merely chill, bearing a heart unkindled."

Then Artemis, more lurid pale with anger
Than snow-fields by the glare of lightning flashed
Against an ebon sky, caught up her bow,
And towards the quiet god eager advanced.
But scarce three onward paces had she ta'en
When Eros, reaching out one delicate arm,
All listlessly as though to bend a flower

SELÉNÉ

Drooping too near his eyes, said, "Come no nearer."

And lo! those glittering feet that tread the sky

As 'twere a turquoise pavement, to the earth
Straightway were fixed; nor could she wield her bow,

But like as when great Héré's arms were bound
By wrathful Zeus in chains of gold, so now
Seléné's arms in viewless chains were fettered.

Then Love, with solemn eyes grown pitiful,
Spake low, in tones more haunting sad and sweet

Than those by wings of sea-birds desolate,
Soft smitten from a long-unfingered lyre,
Whose silver cords, rusted by many a tear,
By many a kiss made warm, ere rain and sun
Had all their will of them, still dimly shine
Above the altar of a ruined temple
Unto whose horns the slimy sea-weed clings
Where once hung wreaths of roses red and white,

Such as by Aphrodité are beloved: .

"Pardon, O goddess, since I thus have bound thee,

SELÉNÉ

That in the end full freedom may be thine,
Unto my words attending, which if heard not,
Thou, uninformed, dire thralldom mayst bring
down

Upon thy radiant head. Give ear, Seléné,
And let thy heart, too, listen, for I purpose
To teach thee somewhat of my real nature,
Which unto mortals—ay, and unto gods—
Is little known. Nor let thy proud soul smile
When I inform thee, Artemis, that thou
No higher honourest, no more desirest
Immaculate and immortal chastity
Than doth the God of Love. Ay, though thou
scoffest,

Am I the only god in whom vain man
Seeth the reflex of himself? Thou, Dian,
Are there not countries where to thee, blood-
hating,

Mankind their fellow-men do offer up,
Thinking by acts of slaughter all abhorrent,
And murder's crimson reek, hot-smoking, thee,
Goddess of chilly flame and infinite whiteness,
Thus to propitiate? By titles false
Art thou not also called, and as Brauronia
Is not the tender flesh of Spartan boys
Scourged in thy honour, till thy snowy altar

SELÉNÉ

Shines red withal as Aphrodité's lips?
Still more, in Ephesus, what rites are thine,
What form revolting, what poor maimed priests!
And sayest thou, then, gods may not be traduced
Even by the very piety of their worshippers?
Alas! not so, and I of all Olympos
By names most various and most false am hailed:
For now they call me son of Pandemea,
And now Urania's offspring; now as Pothos
I am invoked, and now as one with Himeros,
Or as a child am coaxed by frivolous women,
Or with lascivious orgies am approached,
As I a greater Dionysos were,
Of wine more heady and of nymphs more fair.
But this the truth, awful, nor even by thee,
O Artemis, lightly to be received.
I am the mirror of the universe,
Wherein or men or gods themselves behold.
If heavenly their natures, then in me
The essence of the heavenly they perceive,
And as Urania's comrade give me worship;
If, on the other hand, with eyeballs seared
By fumes of earthly fire, they gaze on me,
I, through that bickering and ensanguined flame,
To them appear the Love common to all,
Birds, beasts, and men; and, turning from the stars

SELÉNÉ

Unto the sparks thrown off from hearts inflamed
By the Pandemian Venus, me they worship
As offspring of that earthly deity.
Thus fell poor Steropé, that hapless star,
Twi-natured, for alternately she glowed
With crimson rays of passion all too earthly,
Or with the violet of celestial ardour;
And loving thus, with double soul, a mortal,
Him could not win to immortality,
But fell herself, becoming less than mortal,
Nor freeing from its sensual mesh his soul.
Ay, thus she fell. But this her fault essential
She doth impute to me, saying that in wrath
I hurled her out of heaven; being ignorant
That, save with their consent, not even Love
May cast from heaven the souls that once have
gained it;

Nor doth she dream, nor any, that mine eyes
Oft burn with holy tears, watching the pangs
Of those who worship me as Love Pandemos;
Or that full many a time when Eros smiles
His soul doth weep, or how through bitter ages
He, pitiful—yea, very pitiful
Of ignorant man—who fire prefers to light,
To him doth ceaseless cry, in many a voice,
By tongue of sea, and wind, and hymning sphere,

SELÉNÉ

By sighs of great-souled women wed to those
Who as a pastime look on married love,
And with their bodies, not their spirits, worship;
By groans of poets yoked to empty beauty,
To women fair as flameless lamps are fair,
Whose eyes unlighted by the soul within
Gaze ever downward at the sea of passion,
From out whose fiery spume leaped Aphrodité,
Nor in that ever-troubled deep behold
So much as the reflection of the heavens;
By sobs of delicate maidens on whose breasts
Desire's sweet rose is laid with all its thorns;
By man's true self that pleads within his breast
For holy temperance even in ecstasy.
Yet, though not all in vain my voice is raised,
Few, few there are who worship me aright.
Those few alone know heavenly happiness,
Pure treasure of the spirit-conquered being,
Nor while on earth envy the placid gods.
Thou canst not doubt me, Phœbé, since to thee,
Scornful alike of me and of my power,
I have revealed myself as unto none
In heaven or earth; and for thy sake, O goddess.
Know, then, that ere time was, or gods or men,
It was decreed that thou shouldst feel my power.
Unto this end thou, dauntless, didst defy

SELÉNÉ

The Delphian Oracle, nor wouldst be warned,
Even by me. Yet, knowing me, take comfort;
My shafts, though keen, strike wisdom through
the blood;

My wounds, though never healèd, heal the soul,
By pride and scorn and self-devotion cankered.
My service, worthily done, makes kings more
kingly,

Freeth the souls of slaves, to gods adds god-
head,

Yea, even thee, O daughter of great Zeus,
Will render more divine."

Glowing, he paused,
And fixed her, cold one, with his yearning eyes;
But she, still haughty and with soul unmoved,
Stood in the marvellous radiance of that look
Like to a lovely form of ice that glitters
Beneath the splendour of the morning star,
Illumined, yet unmelted, thus replying:
"Thou sayest, O god, ready in praise of self,
That I am lacking in divinity,
And save through thee can ne'er be all divine.
Know this, that rather would I lose what now,
According to thy words, is mine of godhead
Than owe to thee a throne mightier than Héré's.

SELÉNÉ

Dost thou in truth think me so ignorant
Of all thy subtle wiles: thy quips, thy feignings,
Thy labyrinths of specious, golden phrase,
Thy glittering words that blind poor Reason's
eyes,

Thy honeyed arguments, that, being placed
Within the scales of Justice, clog the beam
With very sweetness, till, although the cause
Of thine opponent be in truth more weighty
Than is the load of Atlas, yet to thee
That trickèd beam will bow? Nay, well I know
thee,

Better, by Zeus! than thou knowest me, for thus
Did Hermes, supple-tongued and full of guile,
Strive to deceive great Phœbos, who as little
Him credited as Phœbé credits thee.

Yet, if perchance thou dost believe thy falsehood,
And thinkest that I am doomed to feel thy power
Beyond what now I feel, unloose mine arms,
That thou mayst conquer worthily, nor smite
Whom first by Moera's aid thou hast made
helpless."

Then Eros gave a cry, exceeding bitter,
As of a mighty soul misunderstood
By one belovèd yet of lesser mould:

SELÉNÉ

“Alas, Seléné! art thou so determined,
In spite of all, to be mine enemy?
Oh, chill of fancy! Wilt thou then refuse,
So often warned, the blessing of my friendship?”

Whereat Seléné laughed, the ready laugh
Of those unused to tears, with upward chin
And eyes no whit less arrogant than before,
To him thus answering: “Idly dost thou speak,
For how should I from thee receive aught
goodly,

Seeing that for me the oracle proclaims
Whether I be or friend or foe of thine,
Sorrow on sorrow, grief on grief up-piled?”

But ever-patient Love, her scorn unheeding:
“And knowest thou not, O sister of Apollo,
That in an oracle hide many meanings
Of which but one is true? Once more attend
While I expound to thee that prophecy
By Themis uttered, lest in days to come
Thou shouldst reproach me with my silence now.
Behold the hidden meaning of her words:
If thou my foe becomest, then, indeed,
Sorrow will fall on thee and mortal pain,
But pain bewildered, seeing not its aim;

SELÉNÉ

Like as when one is wounded in the dark,
And knoweth not which way to turn his feet,
Lest on his enemy's spear he run again,
Or into some deep precipice should stumble.
If I become thy foe, still worse the anguish,
For then, Seléné, thy defiant heart
A loveless immortality must know—
Yea, an eternity of lonely power,
Majestic, glorious, barren as a sphere
Of maiden ice with azure lightning zoned.
Thou wilt remain the unfinished being thou art,
Half goddess great, half woman undeveloped;
A force incapable of creating joy
For others or thyself; the frozen twin
Of life-bestowing Phoebos; the one creature
In heaven or earth in all or part divine,
Ignorant of that mystery supreme
Whereby thou wast thyself brought into being.
If thou my friend becomest verily,
Still woe on weary woe shall be thy portion,
For terrible the ways, and stained with heart's
 blood
Of men, of gods, the ways devious and dark,
That lead unto mine everlasting house,
Set in a tideless sea of golden air,
Amidst of gardens, wherein all may find

SELÉNÉ

Their childhood dreams made real, and, looking
back,

Rejoice, since grief endured redoubles joy.
Still woe, I say, shall be thy portion then,
But woe desired and sweet in bitterness,
Like unto that of one who chooses rather
To weep, at last, above the death-chilled form
Of his beloved than never to have felt
The warm lips warmer grow beneath his kiss,
Or in the kindled eyes ne'er to have bathed,
As in a holy fire, his eager soul,
Now so bereft of all but true bereavement.
This if thou art my friend, O Cynthia.
But lo! if in return I do become
Thy friend, thy guide, thy comrade freely chosen,
Then, Artemis, thou shalt a throne possess
Greater by far than Héré's chair of gold;
A kingdom such as Zeus hath never swayed;
A height of vast, immaculate repose,
Wherefrom Olympos, viewed, will seem a mound
Of marble-dust by children heaped in play.
Then shalt thou feel the full divinity
Which now thou dost declare to be thine own;
Then shalt thou wear true chastity, that jewel
Found in the core of hearts by me ignited
And purified, not scorched by their own flames,

SELÉNÉ

Forever unconsumed, forever burning.
Nor fear to be my friend, since thou in me
Wilt find the true reflection of thyself.”
Again he paused, while o’er his face there stole
A look of wistful majesty, supreme
In pathos, like as though a mighty king,
Loving of heart and yet by none beloved,
Should sue, with anxious eyes and crown extended,
A little arrogant child for some small sign
Of recognition. But the goddess smiled
The maddening smile of self-sure maidenhood,
And thus replied: “For thy much speaking,
Eros,
I, spoken to, my earnest thanks extend thee.
Loose now mine arms, I pray thee, Orator,
That I yet more may thank thee for a deed
Of generosity in generous silence done.”

Whereat the god said, softly: “Be thou loosed.”
And Artemis, exultant, from her quiver
Caught up a fateful shaft, thus fierce exclaiming:
“If, as thou sayest, I am but half divine,
This arrow given me by my father Zeus,
By him made irresistible, will free me—

SELÉNÉ

Ay, thou most soft of voice and hard of heart,
From thee a refuge will procure for me,
Even in the halls of Hades." Crying thus,
Deep in her frost-bright breast the shaft she
plunged.

As when a delicate winter-laden tree,
Beneath the first faint roseate glow of dawn,
Doth seem once more its April bloom to wear,
So Artemis, beneath that wrathful stroke.
For lo! a tender crimson, not of blood,
Floated aerial e'er her piercèd breast,
O'er brow and cheek and throat, crept wavering,
Till like a flame within a shell of ice
Scarlet her crescent flashed. She waned, she
glowed,
She trembled, not as one by arrow smitten,
But like unto a shaft itself, quick quivering
Within a stalwart oak, more hurt than hurting.
Yea, even so she shivered, while with fear
Her bright hair rose about her haughty head
As 'twere a gilded smoke up-shimmering;
And all her face waxed keen with novel dread,
And thin her nostrils grew, and parched her
lips,
And at her feet clanged down her glinting bow;

SELÉNÉ

And her dear moon changed with her, till that
men,

Beholding o'er the violet rim of the sea
Its coral-coloured orb in splendour drifting,
Deemed it a ship on fire.

Then loud she cried
In voice soul-freezing, of divinity
By fate o'erta'en, that voice which makes de-
spair
Of lesser beings seem hope: "Woe! Woe is me!
I change. I am no longer Artemis.
Unto myself I am become a stranger;
I feel no more as I have felt. O Zeus,
Is this, then, death? Was I but half divine?
Alas! Alas! What fearful shafts are mine!
Flame mixes with my blood, and past my ears
I hear it hiss. My breast is full of fire.
Even thee, O thou revengeful, even thee
Only as burning mist I do behold.
Yea, surely this is death, for all my soul
Grows liquid, flowing forth, I know not how,
Unto some mystic depth, I know not what,
Like as a river maddeth to the sea.
Father, I die. Snap thou my bow in twain,
That weaker hands may not profane its might;

SELÉNÉ

And this proud arrow which hath drunk my
greatness,

Oh, pierce with it the cruel breast of Eros,
That never more may he with venom'd shafts
Corrode the hearts to peace and chasteness
vowed.

Yea, Artemis is dying, glad to die,
Since life had meant a servitude to Love.
Now do I comprehend why noble beings
The silence of Death's gloomy halls prefer
Unto the prison-palace reared by Life—
Darkness in freedom unto light in chains.
O Death, whose secret name is Liberty,
Better it were to have thee for a friend,
To range thy starless realm possessed of naught
Beside a soul untrammelled and at ease,
Than rule in fetters on the throne of Heaven.
And yet—can this be death? O sweet, sweet,
sweet!—

O fiery sweet!—O sweet beyond all sweetness!—
O immortality, well art thou lost
If this indeed be death. Again! Again!
Exquisite thirst consumes me! Ah! I burn!
One draught before I die — one deep, deep
draught!

One draught of Love, O Death, before I die!"

SELÉNÉ

“Drink,” said a solemn voice. “The hour is here.
Drink of the cup that thou wast born to drink of,
O Artemis, the cup of love and fate.”

Then quick wheeled Artemis, as oft had wheeled,
By her keen shaft transfixed, some throbbing
doe,

And lo! a shadow huge with eyes of light
And outline feminine, to her extending
A goblet dark wherein there seemed to whirl
A clear, black flame with ruby sparkles rayed.
And once again the implacable voice said,
“Drink.”

Then Artemis, unarmed, sore-smitten, trembling:
“O awful shape, who art thou? Art thou Death?”

But that murk form, the cup still holding forth:
“I am the third in that triumvirate
Which rules the universe — Love, Death, and
Fate.

Moera my name, and this thy destined cup.
Nor canst thou choose but drink, O Artemis,
For lo! the arrow that hath pierced thy heart
No arrow was of thine, but one by me
From out Love’s quiver drawn, and thence to
thine,

SELÉNĒ

Unseen of thee, transferred. Quenchless the
thirst

It hath enkindled in thy seething veins
Save by this potent drink I proffer thee,
Which, though thou shouldst refuse ten thousand
times,

At last, O arrogant one, upon thy knees
Thou'lt sue me to bestow, so fierce the craving,
So all unconquerable the desire
Of those whom Eros wounds, for Fate's black
wine."

Then Artemis, defiant to the end,
Shaped her proud mouth to fit a mocking laugh,
But there did issue forth instead a groan,
Terrible as of those in Tauris slain
Upon her altars, while from wood and glen
There rang a chuckling sound like to the noise
By satyrs made, when, from a leafy covert
Peering, they note some flying dryad fall—
Harsh, clattering notes of vulgar mirth tri-
umphant,

Like clack of waves beneath a hollow rock.
Again she strove to laugh, again she groaned.
Seizing her tender breast with furious hands,
As though to tear away the kindled heart
That shot such light of frenzy to her eyes,

SELÉNÉ

Those eyes of Dian, erstwhile calm and clear
As ice reflecting back a twilit heaven.
Nor knew she what she felt, nor that herself
Had cried aloud to drink, ere death, of love,
So wrought that fire immortal in her veins,
With madness filling her and with desire
For what she knew not, save that 'twas desired
Above all things familiar and possessed.
And, feeling more and more that savage thirst
Wring her proud veins, she, turning suddenly
From Mœra's hand, did smite the fateful cup.
But lo! a miracle—for on the ground
Flowed not the darkling flame, nor was the cup
Against the jagged rock to fragments dashed,
But in the air it floated till its rim
Pressed close the haughty lips of Artemis,
Whose every pulse seemed shrieking, "Drink!
Drink! Drink!"
And once again that awful one said, "Drink!"
And then the voice of Eros murmured, "Drink,"
But softly, as a mother to her babe
When from the brimming breast it turns away
By very thirst confused—softness divine
That when Seléné heard, anew she trembled,
But this time not with fear or wrath. "O
Love,"

SELÉNÉ

Thus from her heart burst forth the new-born
fire—

“O Love, if I have wronged thee, pardon me;
I know not where I am or who, in truth—
Meseems I am a sleep-bewildered dryad,
Who dreamed that she was mighty Artemis.”
And through the only tears she e’er had known,
Pathetic in her new timidity
As is a bride in bridal freshness clad,
She wistful gazed about in search of Eros.
Alas! she saw him not as formerly,
In full effulgence, for between them rose
That grisly shape; but through its essence thin
His glory shone in tempered loveliness,
As through a shadowed sail the silver moon.
And thus to her his words came, clear and sweet,
Like sound from bells afloat on southern seas:

“Take heart, O lovely one, of very fear,
Of very pain take heart to be thyself;
Not as thou wert indeed, for nevermore
Canst thou return unto thy former being;
Nor weep for grief, but rather for delight,
Since after thou hast drunk the cup of Fate
More Artemis thou’lt be in every wise
Than e’er thou wast before. Who from that cup

SELÉNÉ

Unflinching quaffs the dark and burning wine
True godhead knows; knows good and evil;
knows

To choose between them, and, though agony
Should be the crown that nobleness must wear,
Sublimely sets its thorns upon his brow.
Nor in the majesty of highest being
Regrets the glow of happiness foregone.
Drink, then, O Artemis, and be thyself
Unto the full ideal of what thou wert
And yet couldst ne'er have been till of this cup
Thy mighty spirit had partaken. Drink,
In willing calmness, for of Mœra's wine
Both gods and men must drink, or soon or late.
Two ways alone there are to taste of it:
The one in dignity of free compliance;
The other when, within her mighty grasp,
No choice remains but that of forced submission."

Then Artemis, a wonder to herself,
Reached up her slender hands and took the cup,
The heavy cup that bends the wrists of gods,
With proud obedience, him thus answering:
"Still of my former self enough remains
To let me from this baleful chalice drink
Serene of brow as when on hunting-days

SELÉNÉ

From leafy springs the crystal gush I quaffed.
Nor do I hesitate from dread, O Eros,
But that I first may learn if thou forgivest
Her who was Artemis, who is thy friend?"

EROS: Thou wast forgiven ere thou askedst forgiveness;
But ah, too late, too late thy proffered friendship
To save thee from the woe thy scorn hath wrought.

SELÉNÉ: Alas! wilt thou mine enemy become?

EROS: Nay, Artemis, thy friend, as thou art mine.

SELÉNÉ: Why, then, didst thou exclaim, "Too late! Too late!"?

MÆRA: Those who have scoffed at Eros and refused
With scorn his friendship must of me be taught
Ere in full glory they again behold him.

SELÉNÉ: Ah, woe is me, oft warned in vain, in vain!

SELÉNÉ

EROS: Yet be not all despairing, sith from grief
Of noble hearts sweet gladness often wells
As fresh spring-water from the bitter sea.
Endure, achieve, resign. Whom I befriend
Are by all gods befriended at the last.

SELÉNÉ: Ah, could I look on thee but once
again
Ere of this bitter cup I drink, O Love!
Already dim the memory of thy smile.

MÆRA: O hard to learn! How long wilt thou
delay?
Mine now to teach thee, who Love's lesson scorned,
Long, long ere thou mayst look on him again.

SELÉNÉ: Libation I may pour him from this
cup?

MÆRA: Not so, for thou must drain it every
drop.

SELÉNÉ: First let me grasp my well-loved bow
again
And stroke the wistful foreheads of my hounds.
Farewell, farewell, ye clear of eye and heart;

SELÉNÉ

I know not if again in eager chase
Together we may rouse the sacred deer;
No, nor if I, your clanging notes pursuing,
May follow through the coppice sweet with dew
Where shattered trails of blooming eglantine,
Torn by your spiked belts, enmesh the way.
But this I know, that ye have served me well,
Therefore, O friends, O long - tried, trusted
 friends,
Though nevermore ye, twain with Artemis,
May scud the well-loved mountains of Arcadia,
Yet where her throne is ye shall also be,
And shine among the brightest ones in heaven.

MÆRA: Delay no longer — almost gone thine
 hour.

SELÉNÉ: Alas, poor Steropé! Mother, alas!
And thou, O Phœbos, dear, well art thou sleeping;
May no sad dreams of Phœbé mar thy rest!
O grewsome cup, how worn by softest lips
Thine adamantine brim. Idalia's self
Hath not so oft been kissed, nor by such lovers.
Here brushed the beard of great Prometheus;
The curls of Adonais floated here;
Mighty Achilles here did bend his crest.

SELÉNÉ

Thou knewest the mouth of sweet Persephoné,
Of piteous Io, of Callisto frail;
Poor Clyté pressed against thy cruel lips
The lips whereof Apollo would not taste.
The first god drank of thee as must the last,
As doth Seléné.

Speaking thus she quaffed,
Ay, to the lees, that dark and bickering wine.
As when upon a lustrous night in June
A windy cloud the crystal moon obscures,
Turning the silver waters into lead
And breathing dimness o'er the golden wheat,
Even so before the eyes of Artemis
Thin darkness wavered, while within her soul,
As through the caves of Sleep, a twilight spread,
Dulling the precious gold of memory,
And bitterly she cried: "Ah, woe on woe!
Desire in blindness, blindness in desire.
A mighty hand there is upon my heart-strings,
And I must follow, even as the bow
Follows the mastered cord. Yet where to turn?
For all was I prepared but utter darkness.
Phœbos, O Phœbos! lend me of thy light,
Of thy magnificence, but one small ray—
I can bear all but darkness. Phœbos, hear!"

SELÉNĒ

Then, suddenly, o'er sea and land there burst
A splendour, such as light-crowned Artemis
Had ne'er imagined, while the voice of Love,
He being still invisible, rang forth:
"My torch shall light thee to thy heart's desire,
O Artemis. Fear not, but follow on
To where thine eager soul hath leaped before."

But she, bewildered: "All is changed, is changed.
This mountain know I not, this shore, this
wood—

All, all are unfamiliar to mine eyes,
Which have beheld, alas! or so I thought,
The fairest corners of this fairest earth.
Yet so ineffable this loveliness,
Perchance I dreamed of earth and wake in
heaven."

MÆRA: Away! Thy fate is on thee—past the
hour.

SELÉNĒ: Ai me! Who draweth me? I come!
I come!

O pain delicious! O mysterious longing!
O hunger fierce, divine, as of a god
Fire-born, for fire! Endymion, I come!

SELÉNÉ

CHORUS OF DRYADS AND HAMADRYADS

STROPHE

I

Who fareth so fleetly
In silver apparel
And aureate glimmer
Of wind-shaken tresses,
With quiver all empty
And bow-string unloosened?
Like Phœbé's the jewel
Alight on her forehead,
But lurid in colour,
Unmeet for the goddess.

II

We saw not before her
The sacred deer flying—
The gold of the antlers,
The collars of beryl,
The hounds with their baying,
The rosy-kneed maidens;
Yet brighter than mortals'
Her crystalline sandals,
Nor freer, diviner,
The gait of the goddess.

SELÉNÉ

ANTISTROPHE

I

What frenzy of beauty!—
Still beauty, though maddened!
What virginal pallor!
What passion ecstatic!
Thus fled our Seléné
The river-god's kisses;
Thus Daphné the ardour
Of golden Apollo;
A lily thus gleameth
Whirled on by the tempest.

II

Lo! nearer and nearer,
With quick-throbbing raiment
And hiss of long tresses,
The bright one approacheth.
Alas! she hath veiled
Her delicate splendour.
Yet hearken, my sisters,
Though lonely and troubled,
A goddess I deem her.
O come! Let us follow!

SELÉNÉ

SELÉNÉ

I am snow! I am fire!
The bird and its singing,
The wind and the myrtle
It rocks on its bosom!
The deer and the arrow,
The wave and the swimmer,
Delight and desire,
The wine-cup, the mænad!

CHORUS

STROPHE

I

Oh, follow her, follow!
More sweetly she lilteth
Than young Dionysos;
Or were she his sister,
Thus, thus would she carol!
Had flowers but voices,
Meseemeth, O sisters,
A moon-coloured poppy
Would sing as she singeth.
Then follow! Then follow!

SELÉNÉ

II

What free exultation!
What triumph in being!
Thus sang Cytherea,
Still bright with the ocean,
While round her the pigeons,
Like delicate foam-wreaths,
Streamed white in the starshine;
And deep-coloured flowers
Unfurled in her footsteps;
As softlier shining
Than roses through water,
And lighter than rose-leaves
On breezes upfloating
She came from the sea-shore.

ANTISTROPHE

I

Persephoné sang thus
When first from the darkness,
Her bright head uplifting,
She saw as aforetime
The April-hued valley,
The cloud-whitened water,
The fatal, sweet blossoms.

SELÉNÉ

II

And thus sang Demeter,
When, weary with praying,
From eyelids long tearless
She looked and beheld her,
The long-lost, the buried,
In all ways unaltered,
With Hermes approaching!

SELÉNÉ

As the light to the opal,
The bee to the blossom,
The wave to the mainland,
So I to my rapture!

CHORUS

Oh, follow her, follow!

SELÉNÉ

Thou breath of the forest,
Deep, deep I inhale thee;
Like breath of a lover
Thou makest me tremble.
O Pan! Art thou near me?

SELÉNÉ

CHORUS

We follow! We follow!
O Pan, be thou near us!

SELÉNÉ

Thou lyrical water,
More sweetly thou stealest
Athrough the dim covert
Than into a day-dream
The song of a throstle!
What name dost thou murmur?—
What message enchanting?
“Oh, hasten, belovèd!”
Thou seemest to whisper;
“I weary of dreaming
And fain would behold thee!”
Ah, Hermes, thou fleet one,
My bow for thy sandals!

CHORUS

O ecstasy tender!
O passionate yearning!
Ariadne thus singeth,
When, winter well over,

SELÉNÉ

The first golden crocus
With rapture recalleth
The curls of Iacchos.

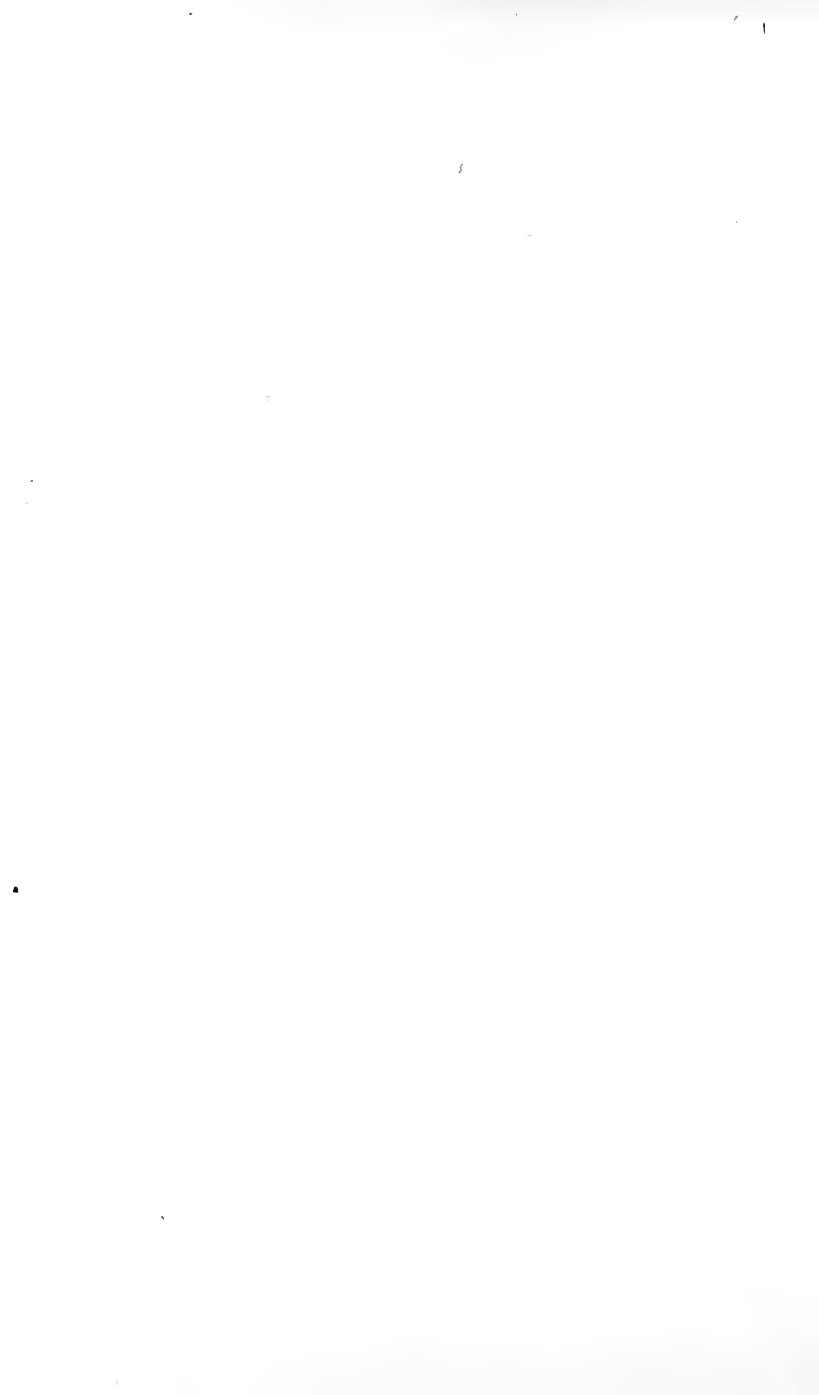
SELÉNÉ

I am sunlight and moonlight,
The fire in the jewel,
The blue in the blossom,
The dew on its petals,
The pearl and the ocean,
The pang and the pleasure,
The gift and the giver,
The prayer and its answer—
Immortal and mortal!

CHORUS

How golden the lyric
When sings an Immortal
In words the divinest
What long we have treasured
Unvoiced in our bosoms!
Oh, follow her, follow!

THE END



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